

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM: SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE POPULATION



*Andriy BYCHENKO,
Director, Sociological Service,
Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies*

A new stage of administrative reform is beginning in Ukraine. Former attempts at reforming the state structures did not produce tangible results. It is difficult to conceal the ineffectiveness of state governance even from an unprofessional observer.

The mechanisms and technologies of the apparatus used within the bodies of state power are little understood to the average Ukrainian, making it difficult for the population to evaluate their work. Nevertheless, every citizen of the country, without exception, experiences the effects of this work. The result of it is the humiliating socio-economic situation in which these citizens have been living over the last years.

Despite the country's evident economic, industrial, scientific, technical, intellectual potential and resources, Ukraine has appeared among Europe's outsiders by many social indicators, including the human development index. Clearly, it is not worth blaming the state apparatus for all of the negative social indicators. But it is also clear that the quality of governing the state and, therefore, that of the life of its citizens, depends on the state apparatus' activity.

That's why experts of the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS) assumed it necessary to determine what the attitude of citizens is to administrative reform initiated by Ukraine's leadership, and its prospects. With this goal in mind, UCEPS sociological service conducted a large-scale poll of citizens in all of Ukraine's regions between March 25 - April 5, 2000; in course of the poll, 1212 respondents were questioned (over 18 years of age). The results of the sociological survey are presented below.

WHAT DO CITIZENS KNOW ABOUT ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM?

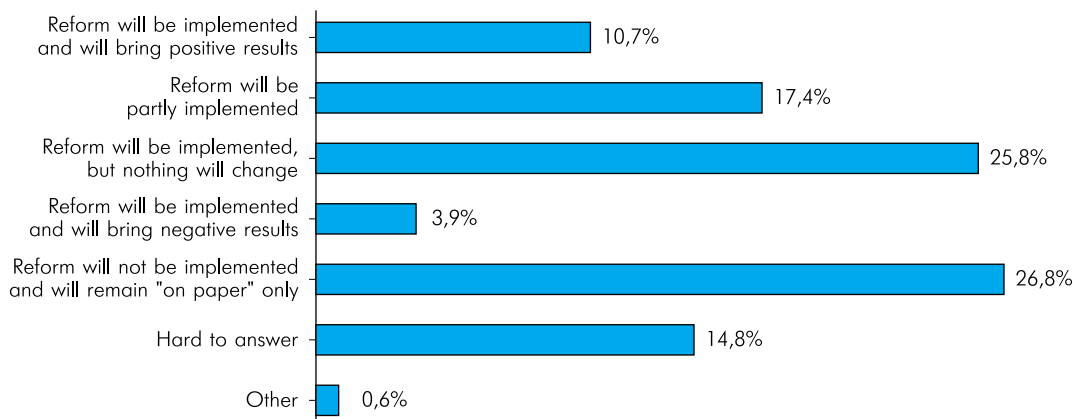
The results of the poll show that **nearly half of all citizens (48%) have heard almost nothing about the decrees issued by the President of Ukraine on the administrative reform; 44.4% of those polled heard about these decrees, but are not familiar with their contents, and only an insignificant number of respondents (7.6%) said that they were familiar with the contents of these**

documents. Basically, this kind of poll result was not difficult to forecast, since only 8.9% of respondents polled in prior UCEPS surveys confirmed that they were very interested in politics.

DO CITIZENS BELIEVE IN THE SUCCESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM?

The survey confirmed a generally sceptical attitude of Ukraine's citizens regarding the prospects of administrative reform (*Diagr. "Pro-*

Prospects of administrative reform in Ukraine, % of respondents



spects of administrative reform in Ukraine"). **Only 10.7% of respondents expressed their confidence that reform will be implemented and will bring positive results.**

Instead, 26.8% of respondents believe that administrative reform will not take place, but will remain "on paper" only. Another one-fourth of those polled (25.8%) thinks that even if reform takes place, it won't change anything. If the 17.4% of those who believe that reform will be only partially conducted, and the 3.9% of respondents who are convinced about its negative results are added, then the general conclusion that can be drawn from this is rather unfortunate: **three-fourths of Ukraine's population are sceptical about the possibility of obtaining positive results from administrative reform.**

This kind of pessimistic attitude correlates to the low assessment of the population regarding

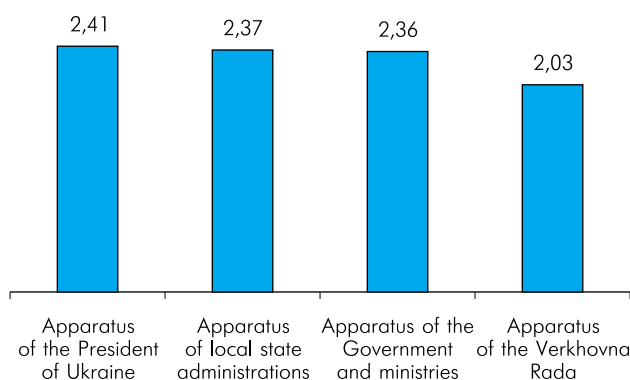
the ability of the authorities to work out an optimal programme of action and its achievement. Thus, in one of UCEPS prior polls¹ that posed the question "Are Ukraine's present authorities capable of developing a programme of action and consistently implementing it?", only 22.5% of respondents gave an affirmative response.

CITIZENS' ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STATE APPARATUS

The research shows that Ukraine's population gives a generally poor evaluation of the effectiveness of its work. According to poll results, the least effective was the work of the apparatus of the Verkhovna Rada. Only 4.4% of respondents evaluated the work of the parliamentary apparatus as effective² (average score: 2.03). Of those polled, 10% believe the work of the Government and ministry apparatus to be effective (average score: 2.36); that of the President of Ukraine — 11.9% of respondents (average score: 2.41), of local state administration — 12.9% (average score: 2.37). As the following Diagram makes clear, the average score on a five-point scale for the apparatus of all the branches of power was between a "2" and a "3"; that is, **Ukraine's population does not give the effectiveness of the work of the state apparatus even a "three"**³. **Only around 10% of those polled believe its work to be effective, which correlates with percentage of those who believe in the success of administrative reform (10.7%).**

An assumption can be made that the low score given by the population to the work of the state apparatus to a large extent engenders the above-mentioned scepticism regarding the

Citizens' evaluation of the effectiveness of apparatus of state bodies



¹ UCEPS sociological service conducted a survey of 2010 citizens over the age of 18 in all of Ukraine's regions between January 25 - February 5, 2000.

² Giving a score of "4" and "5" on a 5-point scale, where "1" is the lowest score, and "5" is the highest.

³ It is interesting that in the city of Kyiv and the Crimea people gave significantly lower scores for the effectiveness of the apparatuses of various institutions of power than in other regions, and in Ukraine in general.



prospects of administrative reform. Possibly, **Ukrainians have simply got used to the fact that between the higher authorities (with their decisions) and the people there is a significant layer of officials — a unique buffer that damps all movement both from above and below, alike. People don't believe that the army of bureaucrats will allow for the realistic implementation of any decisions, especially those that relate to the officials themselves.**

THE POPULATION'S TRUST IN THE AUTHORITIES

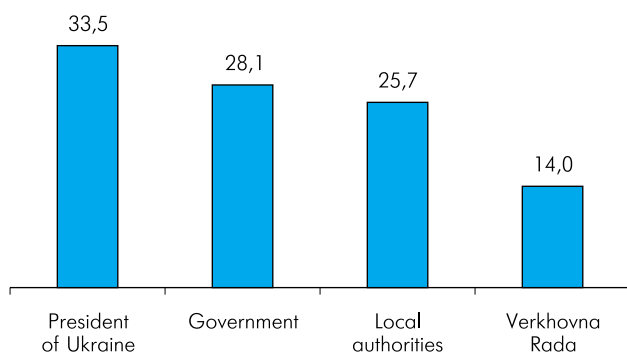
Administrative reform is a complex problem. Its implementation requires long, diligent and well-coordinated work on the part of all the branches of power, and the central and local bodies of state management. A legislative base for conducting reform needs to be created, together with approval

of the requisite acts of the Government, and proper funding of all measures. The main purpose is to raise the quality of the work of the state machinery, improve the population's wellbeing, and ensure the rights and freedoms of the country's citizens. That's why an important condition for success is the population's trust in the authorities.

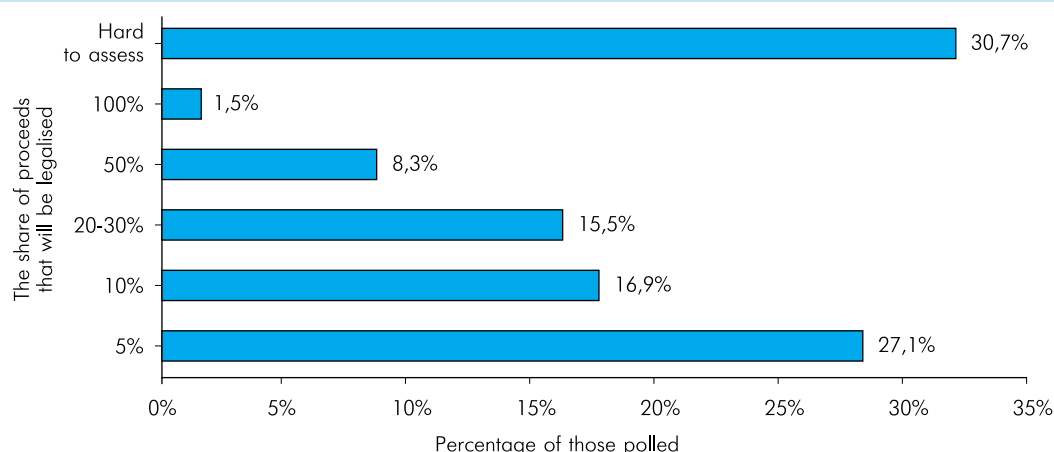
Nevertheless, the data of the sociological survey demonstrate that the **level of trust of the population in the authorities is actually pretty low:** 33.5% of respondents indicated that they trust the President of Ukraine; 28.1% trust the Government; 25.7% — local authorities. The lowest level of trust is enjoyed by the Verkhovna Rada, with only 14% of respondents giving an affirmative response⁴ (*Diagr. "The trust of Ukraine's population to the institutions of state power"*).

The level of trust to the authorities can also be judged based on the population's attitude towards separate actions of the power bodies. For example, recently, the President of Ukraine signed the Decree "On Measures for the Legalisation of the Income of Individuals on Which Tax Has Not Been Paid". During UCEPS sociological survey⁵, respondents were asked to evaluate what portion of illegal proceeds (from non-criminal sources of activity) they thought would be legalised as a result of the implementation of that Decree. According to the respondents, there is a possibility that close to 18-20% of those funds will be brought to light out of the shadow. The answers to this question are given as percentages in the Diagram below (*Diagr. "Respondents' assesment of the share of illegal proceeds of non-criminal origin to be legalised"*).

The trust of Ukraine's population to the institutions of state power, % of respondents



Respondents' assesment of the share of illegal proceeds of non-criminal origin to be legalised

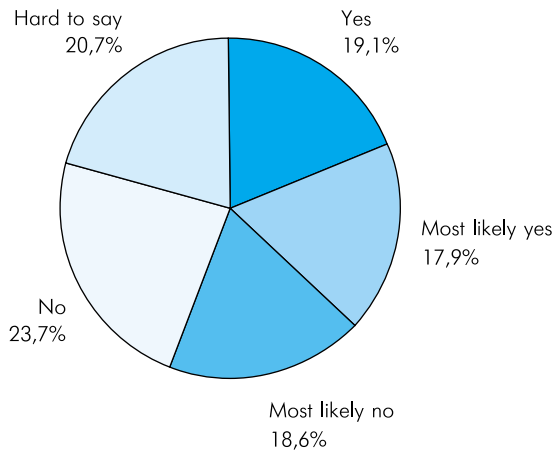


⁴ If the level of trust in the Verkhovna Rada is equally low in all regions, then the level of trust in the President and the Government shows noticeable regional differences. The level of trust in the President in the Western regions is higher than Ukraine-average (trust — 50.6%, don't trust — 36.5%). Instead, in the East the trust in the President is significantly lower than the average for the country (trust — 24%, don't trust — 65%). A similar correlation can also be found in the attitude towards the Government. In the Western regions, a larger percentage of respondents trust the Government — 37.3% (versus a distrust level of 38.7%), than in the East — 22.4% (versus a distrust level of 59.2%). However, in contrast to the attitude of the regions towards the President, the Crimean case is also different. Here, the level of trust to the Government is even lower than in the East — 19% (level of distrust — 62%).

⁵ The survey was conducted between April 15-24, 2000. 2000 citizens over the age of 18 in all of Ukraine's regions were polled.

As the following Diagram makes clear, 37% of those polled said that they were prepared to legalise previously undeclared income of a non-criminal nature⁶; however, a larger percentage of citizens (42.3%)⁷ have no intention to legalise their illegal income (*Diagr. "Readiness of citizens to legalise undeclared proceeds of non-criminal origin"*).

Readiness of citizens to legalise undeclared proceeds of non-criminal origin, % of respondents



It is not difficult to note that the percentage of respondents ready to abide by the presidential decree generally coincides with the indicator of citizens' trust in the head of state (33.5%). It cannot be said with certainty that among these citizens are those "new Ukrainians" who truly have billions that are hidden from taxation.

WHAT IS THE POPULATION'S IDEA OF AN IDEAL AND CURRENT GOVERNMENT OF UKRAINE?

One of the tasks of the survey conducted by UCEPS sociological service between January 25 - February 5, 2000 was to determine what citizens thought Ukraine's authorities should be like. A unique portrait of the ideal authority arose based on the results of the survey. In the first place, **the authorities must be responsible** — 98.1% of those polled believe that responsibility is an important or very important trait. Nearly as many definitely wanted the authorities to be **honest** (97.6%) and **competent** (96.7%). There was a somewhat lower, but also very high requirement that the

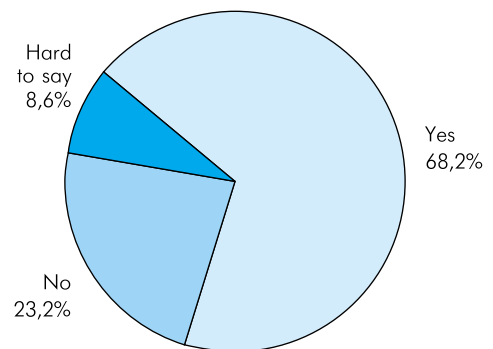
authorities be **democratic** (83.9%) and **predictable** (82%). In this way, citizens created a very high standard that the power structure should attain.

At the same time, the population's evaluation of today's power demonstrates that Ukraine's authorities are still very far from achieving the ideal. Thus, **15.2% of respondents gave the Government a high score⁸ for responsibility; 20.5%, for competence; and for honesty — only 8.8%. Of those polled, 17.8% believe the Government to be democratic, while 13% — predictable.**

However, despite such unpromising general characteristics, it can be concluded that the new Government received a considerable score where the population's trust is concerned — 52.6% of respondents voiced their trust in V.Yushchenko. This is indirectly demonstrated by the desire of two-thirds of those polled (68.2%) to familiarise themselves with the Government's Programme of action⁹ (*Diagr. "Desire of citizens to get familiar with the Government's Programme of action"*).

Of interest are **citizens' thoughts as to what**

Desire of citizens to get familiar with the Government's Programme of action, % of respondents



impedes V.Yushchenko in his work as head of the Government. The corresponding percentages are given in the Diagram "*Factors impeding V.Yushchenko's work as a Prime Minister*". According to respondents, **the willingness of officials to take bribes** is the greatest factor impeding the new Prime Minister in his work — 63.3% of those polled believe that this factor impedes V.Yushchenko "very much". The fact that bribery is the dominant factor evidently results from citizens' experience in dealing with public servants

⁶ The percentage of "yes" (19.1%) and "most likely yes" (17.9%) responses.

⁷ The percentage of "no" (23.7%) and "most likely no" (18.6%) responses.

⁸ "4" and "5" according to 5-grade system.

⁹ It should be noted that, on the one hand, the population's trust is, without a doubt, a significant precondition for the successful implementation of the Government's Programme of action. However, on the other hand, the more expectations arise in connection with the new Prime Minister, the more negative can be the socio-psychological results in the event that the Programme of action of his Government fails.

(60.5% of those polled indicated that they have had personal experiences with giving bribes to state officials in order to be able to exercise their legal rights).

In general, this is a relatively demonstrative indicator of the work of the state machinery in its present form. If the fact that 47.5% of respondents came up against the situation where they had to pay a bribe in order to achieve a result which was a violation of the law or normative act is taken into account, then the conclusion can be made that **"the rules of the game" of the state are, to a large extent, created by the bureaucrats regardless of the law.**

Without in any way excusing the officials who take bribes, it should be noted that the level of legal awareness is low not only for officials, but for the population in general as well. According to the survey results, less than half of the respondents (44.6%) worry about making sure that every step that they take on a daily basis is in line with the law. However, 88.2% of those polled indicated the strong influence of their obligations to people close to them on their behaviour. On this basis it is possible to draw a conclusion that officials differ little from average citizens. After all, a bribe is nothing but a demonstration of one giving oneself and those he is close to higher priority than to his duty before the law.

The citizens believe that the second greatest impediment for the Prime Minister is the **imperfect mechanisms of state power** (56.2%). In third place — **the overly numerous staff of the state apparatus** (54.7%). Not a few respondents (42.6%) believe that V.Yushchenko is strongly impeded by **the low qualification of the officials**. Among other reasons —

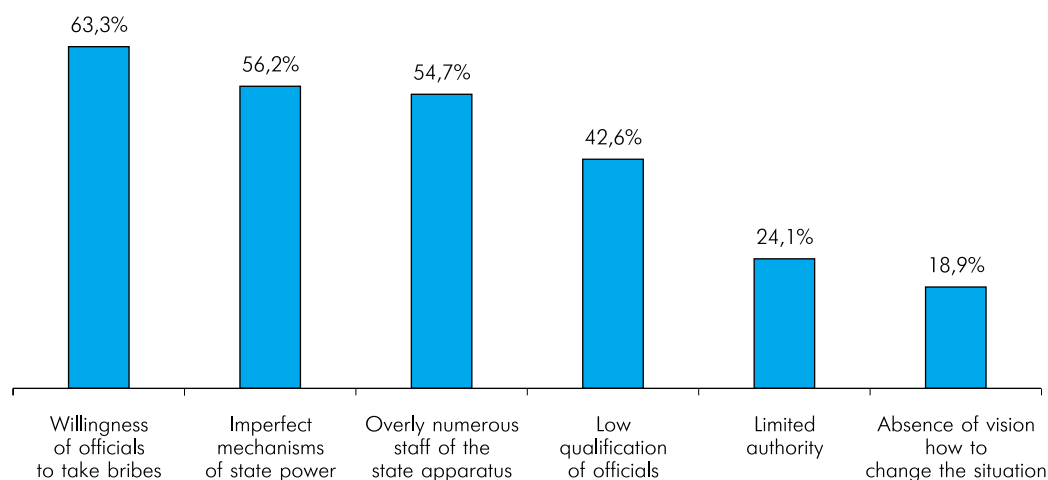
limited authority (24.1% of respondents believe this), as well as **the absence of vision on the part of the Prime Minister himself how to change the situation**, which 18.9% of respondents are certain about.

HOW DO CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THE GOAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM?

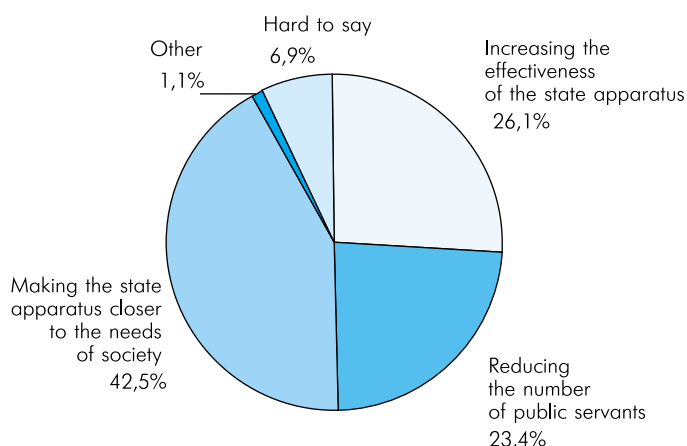
It is clear from the Diagram "Main goal of administrative reform" that the largest number of respondents (42.5%) believe that the main goal of administrative reform should be **making the state apparatus closer to the needs of society**. According to the citizens, the current state apparatus is not very concerned with their problems. 26.1% of citizens believe the main goal of administrative reform to be **increasing the effectiveness of the state apparatus**; another 23.4% of respondents believe it to be **reducing the number of public servants**. It is worth noting that the percentage of respondents that gave this response is noticeably lower among people with a higher and incomplete higher education (14-16%). Evidently, a higher educational level allows people to understand that the number of officials is not the most important problem of state management in Ukraine.

Despite all the understanding that an overly large number of officials is not the main impediment to the effective work of authorities, the overwhelming majority of citizens is convinced that it is worth making the state apparatus smaller: 85% of respondents welcomed the Decree of the President of Ukraine on decreasing the number of public servants by 30% (Diarg. "The attitude of citizens to reducing the number of public servants by 30%").

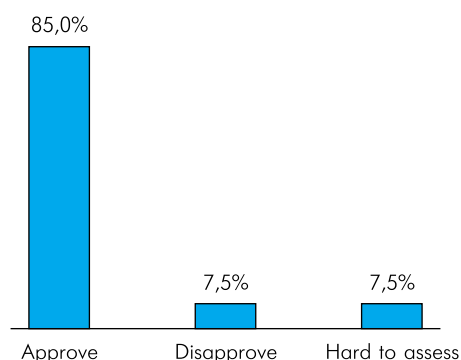
Factors impeding V.Yushchenko's work as a Prime Minister,
% of respondents



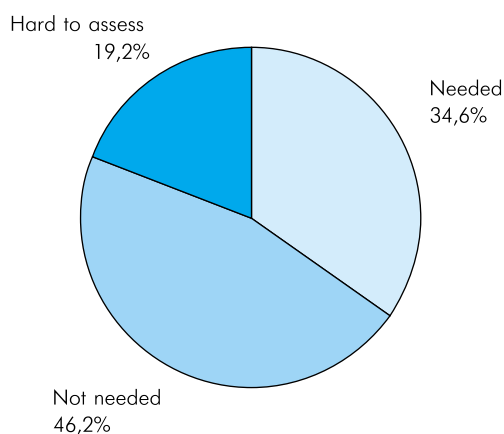
Main goal of administrative reform, % of respondents



The attitude of citizens to reducing the number of public servants by 30%, % of respondents



Public attitude to the introduction of lustration in Ukraine, % of respondents



As far as other provisions of the President's decrees (on administrative reform) are concerned, among those who are familiar with their contents, responses were divided in the following manner. 33.1% of respondents approve the provisions that envisage a **change in the role of the Cabinet of Ministers** (21.2% do not approve them, while 45.7% could not answer this question). **Strengthening the role of ministers as political figures** was approved by 28.3% of respondents, while 41.4% did not approve this measure, and almost one-third (30.3%) could not decide. It is possible that this indecisiveness is connected with a lack of information, the absence of a clear political orientation on the part of citizens, and their political passivity.

It is well known that one of the elements of administrative reform that took place in post-Communist countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, and others), was the cleanup of personnel among public servants. This problem is also being discussed within Ukrainian political circles of a national-democratic orientation.

The question about public attitude toward lustration, or the cleanup of personnel was posed during the UCEPS sociological survey as well. The results of the survey demonstrate that **the public opinion in Ukraine remained unclear regarding the problem of personnel cleanup**: 34.6% of respondents indicated that it was worth going through with a cleanup, 46.2% did not think that was expedient, while 19.2% of those polled could not give any answer to this question (*Diagr. "Public attitude to the introduction of lustration in Ukraine"*).

The results of the sociological survey make it possible to draw an overall conclusion that Ukraine's population is rather sceptical about the actions of the authorities aimed at reforming state structures, and generally does not believe in their effectiveness.

Only reducing the number of personnel within the state apparatus is something that most citizens understand. But with respect to other measures, of the miniscule amount of those who are familiar with the contents of the presidential decrees on administrative reform, from one-third to nearly one-half of respondents cannot decide what their attitude is towards them.

The results of the survey demonstrate that the initiators of reform failed to ensure the necessary level of publicity, which resulted in an inability to garner the support of the society. Meanwhile, ignoring the thoughts of the country's citizens can lead to a further decrease in the level of trust in reforms engineered by the authorities, and in the authorities themselves.